



**Charter School Authorizer Evaluations  
Evaluator Guide  
2023**

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## About this Document

This document provides supplementary guidance to the Tennessee State Board of Education (“State Board”) authorizer evaluators and is designed as a companion document to be utilized during evaluator orientation. This guide will be updated annually; evaluators should always rely on the most recent form of guidance.

## Introduction

In 2019, the General Assembly charged the State Board with conducting periodic evaluations of authorizers to determine authorizer compliance and evaluate quality. Tennessee was the fourth (4<sup>th</sup>) state in the U.S. to implement authorizer evaluations. The State Board partnered with an education consulting group with experience in authorizer evaluations to develop an evaluation system based on State Board [Policy 6.111 – Quality Charter Authorizing Standards](#).

As part of the development process, the State Board gathered feedback from operators, authorizers, and charter school stakeholders on its Quality Charter Authorizing Standards, conducted focus groups to review feedback, connected with the three (3) other states that had an established authorizer evaluation system, and established a task force that included authorizers and operators to share in the development of the evaluation process. In addition, the State Board implemented a pilot evaluation with two (2) authorizers participating voluntarily in Fall 2020. The pilot served as a valuable step to prepare the State Board and Tennessee authorizers for the official high-stakes authorizer evaluations beginning in Fall 2021.

Upon the conclusion of the pilot evaluation, the State Board finalized its [Rule 0520-14-01-.08](#) and [Policy 6.113](#) on charter school authorizer evaluations, which provide further details on the evaluation process, evaluation ratings, and corresponding follow-up actions. The State Board believes that quality authorizing leads to quality charter schools and increased educational opportunities for students.

## Authorizer Evaluation Process Overview

Pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-13-145, the State Board shall ensure the effective operation of authorizers in the state and shall evaluate authorizer quality. The State Board is charged with conducting periodic evaluations of authorizers to determine authorizer compliance. An authorizer’s failure to remedy non-compliance may result in the reduction of the authorizer fee.

One of the primary mechanisms for fulfilling this purpose is a comprehensive evaluation process that sets clear standards for authorizer performance through the Quality Charter Authorizing Standards, promotes authorizer accountability, and includes tools and processes designed to evaluate performance and monitor compliance.

The State Board assesses the operations and performance of authorizers in a two (2)-year cycle that culminates in an authorizer’s evaluation. The components of the State Board’s evaluation cycle include an evaluation year, a non-evaluation year, and corrective actions, if applicable. Authorizers are divided into two (2) cohorts and evaluated in the following sequence:

<b>Cohort</b>	<b>Authorizers</b>
<b>Cohort 1</b> (beginning Fall 2021)	Hamilton County Schools Knox County Schools Shelby County Schools
<b>Cohort 2</b> (beginning Fall 2022)	Achievement School District Metro Nashville Public Schools Tennessee Public Charter School Commission

The evaluation is based on the standards within State Board Policy 6.111 – Quality Charter Authorizing Standards. The standards are organized into five (5) categories within the [Evaluation Rubric](#): Agency Commitment and Capacity; Application Process and Decision Making; Performance Contracting; Ongoing Oversight and Evaluation; and Amendment, Renewal and Revocation Decision Making. The evaluation’s overall rating is an averaged score based on the evaluation team’s assessment of standards and corresponding sub-standards within each category.

Authorizers are required to submit documented evidence that demonstrates alignment with the State Board’s Quality Charter Authorizing Standards, a narrative explanation providing further context for the documentation, and a table of contents. Authorizers may only submit their documentation during the designated submission window. Once the submission window closes, no further documents may be submitted unless requested by the evaluation team during the evaluation. See the “Evaluation Step-by-Step” section of this guide for more information.

### Sub-Standard and Standard Ratings

Each standard is comprised of one (1) or more sub-standards. Sub-standards are rated by the evaluation team as 0, 1, 2, 3, or 4 (see Chart 1). The sub-standard ratings are then averaged to determine the rating for each standard.

**Chart 1: Sub-Standard and Standard Ratings**

0	1	2	3	4
No explanation or documentation	Narrative and/or documentation <b>addresses and satisfies less than 50%</b> of the standard	Documentation <b>addresses most but satisfies 50% or less</b> of the standard	Documentation <b>addresses and satisfies more than 50%</b> or more of the standard	Documentation <b>addresses and satisfies 100%</b> of the standard

**Authorizer’s Overall Rating**

The final product of each evaluation is an Authorizer Evaluation Report which includes final scores and evaluative comments for each sub-standard of the rubric, an overall evaluation rating (see Chart 2), and any required follow-up actions. The evaluative comments provide brief statements to describe the nature of the documented evidence in relation to each sub-standard of the rubric. Comments also note cases in which the authorizer did not provide relevant documents or provided documents that were missing some or all the criteria stated in the rubric. The overall rating is determined by averaging the standard ratings across the individual standards.

**Chart 2: Overall Ratings**

Score	Rating
<b>3.50 – 4.00</b>	<b>Exemplary</b>
<b>3.00 – 3.49</b>	<b>Commendable</b>
<b>2.00 – 2.99</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<b>1.00 – 1.99</b>	<b>Approaching Satisfactory</b>
<b>0 – 0.99</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory/Incomplete</b>

## Authorizer Documentation

Authorizers must submit documents that provide evidence of their authorizing processes and practices via a filesharing platform utilized by the State Board. When submitting documents and files for the review, authorizers should upload documents that best demonstrate the standard and sub-standard in question. Authorizers are encouraged to submit the most relevant and up-to-date documentation to reflect their current expectations and practices that were developed or active during the two (2)-year review term<sup>1</sup>; documents in draft form may also be submitted.

All documentation must be the property of the authorizer – documents from other authorizers or guidance documents from the Department of Education will not be considered as part of the evaluation. Unless additional documentation is requested by the evaluation team during the Document Debrief, only documentation submitted within the submission window will be considered. If an authorizer has not implemented an established practice within the review term, only the established practice documentation will be evaluated. For example, if an authorizer has an established closing procedure but did not implement the procedure within the last two years, only documentation regarding the authorizer’s closing procedure will be evaluated.

Most standards will be evaluated utilizing documents from schools randomly selected by the State Board and identified via a table like the one included below. Only documentation from the selected schools will be assessed when evaluating these standards. The State Board will share the list of selected schools with each authorizer during the authorizer orientation. See Appendix B of the [Authorizer Handbook](#) for further information.

Authorizer:		
<i>Evaluation Standard</i>	<i>Required Documentation</i>	<i>Selected School(s)</i>
2b, 2c, 2d	Charter Applications (2)	A.
		B.
3a, 3b, 3c, 3d	Charter Agreements (2)	C.
		D.
4a, 4b, 4c	Operational School Documents: Pre-Five-Year Review (1) <i>Note: Authorizers may submit documentation from any school for 4d – School Intervention.</i>	E.
4a, 4b, 4c	Operational School Documents: Post-Five-Year Review (1) <i>Note: Authorizers may submit documentation from any school for 4d – School Intervention.</i>	F.
5a	Amendment Petitions (2)	G.
		H.

<sup>1</sup> The review term includes all documentation developed or active which date back two (2) years from September 1 of the evaluation year.

5b, 5c	Renewals (2)	I.
		J.
5d	Revocation (1)	K.
5e	Closure (1)	L.

While authorizers are encouraged to use discretion when uploading documents, there are no page limits. Authorizers must also submit an explanatory narrative for each standard using the State Board’s template, which shall include a brief explanation of the documentation provided. Narrative explanations are limited to 500 words per standard and is based on documentation. The narrative form provides the authorizer with an opportunity to rate their evidence against the rubric and describe how the evidence supports their anticipated rating. Narratives should explain ratings and bold the names/numbers of documents referenced in the narrative. Authorizers may reference the same uploaded document for multiple standards.

Additionally, authorizers are expected to ensure documents and files are easy to open and easy to read. It is the authorizer’s responsibility to confirm all uploaded documents and files work properly. Documents and files that cannot be opened or are unreadable could result in a lower score on a standard. Authorizers are also expected to submit a table of contents with a complete list of all documentation submitted. Document suggestions and a complete scoring guide can be found in the [Evaluator’s Additional Guidance](#).

## The Evaluation Team

### Staffing

The evaluation team consists of three (3) members who observe the following roles:

- Evaluation Lead – Reviews all documents, generates rubric ratings, reviews team member rubrics, facilitates the school leader interview and documentation debrief, presents during the consensus meetings and preliminary report out, writes the evaluation report, and responds to quality editor’s report feedback.
- Team Member – Reviews all documents, generates initial rubric ratings, takes notes during the document debrief and school leader interview, and participates in the consensus meetings.

In addition to the three (3) members of the evaluation team, the evaluation staff also includes:

- Quality Editor – Participates in the consensus meeting and reviews the draft reports to ensure consistency across all evaluations.
- Project Manager – Manages evaluation logistics, schedules all meetings and interviews, reviews and edits the final report, shares the report with authorizer, and updates the report to reflect authorizer’s feedback. This role can be combined with the evaluation lead.
- Copy Editor – Copy edits the report. It is recommended that this role is assigned to someone who is completely removed from the process.

### Responsibilities

The Evaluation Team is responsible for reviewing all documents submitted by the authorizer and considering evidence discussed during the school leader interview and document debrief with the authorizer. Each member of the Evaluation Team member must independently review and score all evidence relevant to each standard against the evaluation rubric. Upon completion of an initial evaluation, the Evaluation Team will discuss the evidence and reach a consensus on ratings. It is the Evaluation Lead’s responsibility to develop and finalize a consensus rubric based on the consensus meeting with team members.

### Time Commitment

High-quality and consistent evaluators are the key to the success of an authorizer’s evaluation. Choosing to serve on an Evaluation Team should not be considered lightly and requires a full commitment to the requirements bulleted below. Note: The bulleted list is only for Evaluation Team Members. All other roles require different and/or additional time commitments. The State Board will make every effort to schedule trainings, meetings and evaluation team assignments based on each member’s availability. Further information about the evaluation is provided in the “Evaluation Cycle” section of this guide.

- Evaluator Training – two (2) full 7-hour days in October
- Document Review – up to 20 hours reviewing authorizer documentation; three (3) full workdays are set aside to complete this during Days 1-3 of an evaluation. Evaluators who may need more time or are concerned about the potential for other responsibilities to arise during the designated review days should plan to begin review earlier than Day 1.
- Document Debrief – 60-minute virtual meeting on Day 4 of the evaluation week
- School Leader Interview – 60-minute virtual meeting on Day 4 of the evaluation



- Consensus Call – three and a half (3.5) hour virtual meeting on Day 5 of the evaluation

### **Evaluator Code of Conduct**

- Carry out work with integrity.
- Treat all those you encounter with courtesy and sensitivity.
- Allay anxiety through mutual respect and valuing opinions. Show an interest in what is said/presented.
- Focus attention and questions on topics that will reveal the quality of an authorizer's practices.
- Evaluations are confidential until their public release.
- Try to understand what authorizers are doing and why. Be supportive.
- Be objective; base findings on evidence, not opinion.
- Evaluations must be robust, fully supported by evidence, defensible, and must inform the ratings.
- Evaluators must seek to produce an evaluation that is objective such that others would make the same conclusion from the same evidence.

### **Tennessee Open Records Act**

The State Board's authorizer evaluations are considered public records and can be requested at any time. This project is limited to one hard copy deliverable, known as the consensus rubric, and utilizes assigned letters rather than names as evaluator identifiers. Evaluators will create one initial rubric that's uploaded to a filesharing platform. Evaluators should not make changes to the initial rubric after it's submitted. The process is designed to allow for the editing of the consensus rubric by the evaluation team throughout the remaining stages of the evaluation. Additionally, evaluators should not email team members with comments and/or questions pertaining to the ratings for any authorizer. As questions arise, plan to discuss these during the designated meetings or schedule additional times.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

Evaluators must complete a Conflict of Interest (COI) form prior to beginning an evaluation. The purpose of the COI form is to document any potential or real conflicts with the evaluation documentation or authorizer being evaluated, including personal and/or professional relationships. If a conflict or question exists, contact the evaluation lead prior to engaging in the evaluation.

## Evaluation Cycle

For authorizers in an evaluation year, the evaluation process includes the following steps:

- Authorizers attend a required orientation in August;
- Authorizers upload documentation to a folder via Box.com assigned by State Board staff between September and October;
- Authorizers submit a charter school data list with the operating status, history, and school leader for each school in its portfolio;
- Authorizers work with the State Board staff to schedule the evaluation between October and December;
- Evaluation Team Members participate in a mandatory training in October that includes an overview of the evaluation and scoring processes, a review of the rubric, and norming on ratings and the writing of evaluative comments;
- During the evaluation, the Evaluation Team reviews the submitted documentation for each authorizer and the authorizer’s appeal history, if applicable, which will include any findings and recommendation report(s) issued by the executive director of the appeals body and the final decision by the appeals body for any appeals that occurred within the review term;
- During the evaluation, the Evaluation Team schedules and conducts an interview with school leaders from the authorizer’s portfolio;
- During the evaluation, the Evaluation Team schedules and conducts a meeting with the authorizer, known as the Document Debrief, to discuss the submitted documentation;
- At the end of the evaluation, the Evaluation Team Lead reviews preliminary evaluation ratings with the authorizer;
- Evaluation Team Lead shares a draft evaluation report with the authorizer by January;
- Authorizer reviews draft evaluation report and provides factual corrections in January, if applicable;
- Evaluation Team Lead shares the final evaluation report with the authorizer in January;
- Final evaluation ratings presented to the State Board for approval at its first quarterly or special called board meeting following the release of the final evaluation report to the authorizer;
- Upon State Board approval, written notification of approval is sent to the authorizer and the final evaluation report is posted to the State Board’s website;
- Authorizers receiving a rating of “Approaching Satisfactory” or “Unsatisfactory/Incomplete” must acknowledge receipt of the written notification and any required follow-up actions no later than ten (10) business days after the written notification is sent to the authorizer; and
- Authorizers receiving a rating of “Approaching Satisfactory” or “Unsatisfactory/Incomplete” must develop a corrective action plan.

### The Evaluation

Each authorizer and Evaluation Team will be assigned evaluation dates. The State Board will make every effort to set the evaluation for a date range that works for the authorizer and the Evaluation Team. The Evaluation Team will have access to the authorizer’s submitted documentation three (3) business days prior to the start of an evaluation to ensure access and begin reviewing, as desired.

An evaluation consists of the following components:

- Days 1 – 3
  - Evaluation Team conducts document review and completes initial ratings
- Day 4
  - Evaluation Team meets with authorizer for the Document Debrief
  - Evaluation Team interviews charter school leaders
  - Evaluation Team conducts review of any additional requested documentation
- Day 5
  - Evaluation Team holds a consensus meeting
  - Evaluation Team Lead meets with Quality Editor to review preliminary ratings and evaluative comments
- Days 6-9
  - Evaluation Team Lead works with Quality Editor and State Board staff to draft the evaluation report
- Day 10
  - Evaluation Team Lead meets with authorizer to share preliminary ratings

The table below outlines the steps to complete for the Evaluation Lead, Team Member, and Quality Editor. See “Evaluation Step-by-Step” section of this guide for a full explanation of each task.

Day	Lead	Team Member	Quality Editor
<b>October</b>	<b>Evaluator Training</b> Facilitate the two-day training to review this guide and complete norming practice	<b>Evaluator Training</b> Attend the two-day training to review this guide and complete norming practice	<b>Orientation</b> Meet with the Evaluation Lead for a one-hour overview of the evaluation process and role
<b>3 Business Days Prior to Evaluation</b>	<b>Access Documents</b> Ensure access to authorizer documentation and begin document review, as desired.	<b>Access Documents</b> Ensure access to authorizer documentation and begin document review, as desired.	
<b>Days 1-3</b>	<b>Document Review</b> Review documents against rubric, rate and write evaluative comments for each sub-standard, and determine the overall standard scores. Lead evaluation team check in on Day 3. Submit initial evaluation by EOD (11:59pm) on Day 3.	<b>Document Review</b> Review documents against rubric, rate and write evaluative comments for each sub-standard, and determine the overall standard score. Attend evaluation team check in on Day 3. Submit initial evaluation by EOD (11:59pm) on Day 3.	
<b>Day 4</b>	<b>Document Debrief (AM)</b> Facilitate 60-minute virtual meeting with authorizing staff via WebEx	<b>Document Debrief (AM)</b> Attend and take notes during 60-minute virtual meeting with authorizing staff	

	<p><b>School Leader Interview (AM)</b> Facilitate 60-minute virtual meeting using standardized questions via WebEx</p> <p><b>Additional Document Review (PM)</b> Review additional requested documents and finalize initial rubric, as needed</p>	<p><b>School Leader Interview (AM)</b> Attend and take notes during 60-minute virtual meeting via WebEx</p> <p><b>Additional Document Review (PM)</b> Review additional requested documents and finalize initial rubric, as needed</p>	
<b>Day 5</b>	<p><b>Consensus Meeting (AM)</b> Lead discussion on evaluation ratings and build consensus rubric</p> <p><b>Quality Editor Review (PM)</b> Present findings to Quality Editor during 90-minute virtual meeting via WebEx. Per discussion, note adjustments to rubric ratings to prepare for writing.</p>	<p><b>Consensus Meeting (AM)</b> Participate in discussion on evaluation ratings</p>	<p><b>Quality Editor Review (PM)</b> Skim ratings/findings before call. Participate in 90-minute virtual meeting via WebEx to clarify ratings and evidence as needed</p>
<b>Days 6-9</b>	<p><b>Report Writing</b> Work with Quality Editor to continue writing and finalize evaluation report draft. Finalize report and send to internal leadership by 5:00pm on Day 9.</p>		<p><b>Quality Editing</b> Work with Lead to review draft report for terminology and/or grammatical edits, compare across authorizers, and email edited report to Lead by noon on Day 9.</p>
<b>Day 10</b>	<p><b>Preliminary Report Out (AM)</b> Meet with authorizer to share preliminary evaluation results</p>		

## **Evaluation Step-by-Step**

### **Evaluator Training (October)**

The Evaluation Lead schedules a mandatory two (2)-day training for all evaluators. The training is an opportunity to deeply review this guide, provide a full overview of the evaluation, and to practice evaluating documents against the evaluation rubric. The training will also include time to practice writing evaluative comments and ensure every evaluator feels confident to begin an evaluation. Evaluator training is held virtually and will be scheduled far in advance to ensure there are no scheduling conflicts.

### **Access Documents (3 business days prior to the evaluation)**

Evaluators receive access to the filesharing platform where the authorizer's documentation is stored approximately three (3) business days prior to the start of the evaluation. Evaluators should confirm access immediately and may choose to begin reviewing the documentation before Day 1 of the evaluation, as desired. Documentation review can take up to 20-hours across Days 1-3 and therefore it is recommended that evaluators begin their independent review early to account for any last-minute interruptions during Days 1-3 of the evaluation. Evaluators must review all submitted documentation, narrative form responses, and appeals documents, as applicable, and score all standards, unless marked as "N/A".

### **Document Review (Days 1 – 3)**

Each evaluator will be assigned a personal identifier (A, B, or C) and will download a copy of his/her own rubric from the State Board's filesharing platform. Evaluators are responsible for reviewing every document in the "Documentation" folder, including any appeals documentation uploaded by State Board staff, if applicable, and the authorizer's narrative form. In addition to the documentation review, evaluators will score each sub-standard using the relevant submitted documentation to determine which sub-standard score applies to the authorizer. For sub-standards or standards that do not apply, rate as "n/a". After assigning a sub-standard rating, draft an evaluative comment using tips provided in the "Writing Tips" section of this guide and the discussion during Evaluator Orientation. The overall standard score is determined by averaging all the sub-standards within that standard.

While reviewing the submitted documentation, Evaluation Team Members may notice that certain necessary documentation was not submitted. If an Evaluation Team Member determines that a document was incorrectly submitted or not submitted at all and the document would be beneficial in assessing the authorizer's processes and practices, the team member should generate a list of requested documentation. Additionally, the Evaluation Team will meet briefly at noon on Day 3 to clarify questions and prepare a list of questions to ask during Day 4's Document Debrief.

Upon completing the initial evaluation, each Evaluation Team Member shall upload the evaluation rubric and the list of requested documentation, if applicable, to the filesharing platform. Each evaluator must submit their completed initial rubric and requested documentation list by EOD (11:59pm) on Day 3. A rubric is considered complete when the evaluator has reviewed all documentation and assigned sub-standard ratings, crafted evaluative comments for each sub-standard rating, calculated an overall rating for each standard, and completed the summary ratings page of the rubric. Ratings shall be to the tenth place without rounding. For example, when calculating an average rating, a score of 3.57 shall be

documented as 3.5.

Possible Scenarios When Weighing All Evidence:

Scenario 1: The document review indicates the authorizer has uploaded one site visit report per school. During the documentation debrief, the authorizer says it conducts two visits to every school per year, but only offered one report per school as an example.

Q – Do we raise the score from what we determined based on the documents alone?

A – No. Add an evaluative comment identifying what was said during the Documentation Debrief. For example: “During the documentation debrief, the authorizer stated that it conducts two site visits to every school; however, authorizer documentation includes one site visit report per school.”

Scenario 2: The document review indicates strong/clear artifacts and a high pre-rating. During the Documentation Debrief, the authorizer offers a response that is inconsistent with the artifacts.

Q - Do we lower the score from what we determined based on the documents alone?

A - No. The Evaluation Lead will note this in the evaluation report but it will not negatively impact the score.

#### **Document Debrief (Day 4 – AM)**

The Document Debrief is an opportunity for the authorizer to contextualize their documentation and their role as an authorizer. Authorizers have 30-minutes to share information about their authorizing context, explain any unique documentation, and provide an overview of how the documentation works together; no new evidence may be considered.

The Evaluation Lead will schedule the Document Debrief for one (1) hour with 10-minutes reserved for an opening and closing, 20-minutes for questions from the Evaluation Team, and 30-minutes for the authorizer to present. The authorizer may choose up to five (5) individuals to participate in the meeting, though additional attendees may be requested. Typical participants include staff members fully or partially funded by the authorizer fee and/or consultants who have actively implemented the organization’s authorizing responsibilities. School staff should not participate in the Document Debrief.

The Evaluation Team will have dedicated time during the meeting to ask clarifying questions regarding information presented by the authorizer or any documentation submitted during the submission window. Additionally, the Evaluation Team may request additional documentation that was missing from the authorizer’s submission. Any requested documentation must be received by the Evaluation Lead within 90-minutes of the conclusion of the Document Debrief to be considered. Documentation received outside of this additional window shall not be accepted. See “Document Debrief Script” in the Appendix of this guide.

Documentation takes priority over verbal evidence provided by the authorizer during the Document Debrief. For example, an authorizer may verbally explain how they handle conflicts of interest in a convincing and coherent manner, but if no documentation is provided to corroborate their verbal

comments, there would be no impact on your scoring. In this case, acknowledge the documentation debrief evidence, and then state that there is no documentation to support this practice. For example, “While the authorizer verbally described collecting data from the Dean of Academics during onsite reviews, authorizer documentation does not corroborate this practice.” Conversely, if an authorizer submits an excellent document, but in the Document Debrief it becomes clear that the authorizer does not understand the document, the Evaluation Lead will note this in the evaluation report, but it will not negatively impact the score.

#### **School Leader Interview (Day 4 – AM)**

The interview is an opportunity for school leaders from the authorizer’s charter school portfolio to respond to questions regarding their authorizer’s expectations and practices. The interview is conducted virtually, limited to one (1) hour in length, and optional for school leaders to attend.

The Evaluation Lead will schedule the interview and invite school leaders to attend. While the interview is optional for school leaders, all members of the Evaluation Team are required to participate. The school leader interview is conducted virtually the morning of Day 4 via WebEx following the Document Debrief. The Evaluation Lead will facilitate the interview using prescribed school leader interview questions that are aligned with the evaluation rubric. Evaluation Team Members should take notes during the interview and plan to share any changes in their evaluation evidence during the consensus meeting, as needed. Should the final evaluation report refer to information shared during the school leader interview, school leaders or schools will not be named. Evaluators should avoid attributing names to comments in their interview notes as well. See “School Leader Interview Script” in the Appendix of this guide.

Information shared during the interview may only impact an authorizer’s score for relevant standards identified in the Evaluator Additional Guidance document. If a school leader shares details that contradict any of the authorizer’s documentation, the Evaluation Lead will note this in the evaluation report and may only negatively impact the score if aligned to the pre-determined sub-standards. The purpose of the interview is to develop a deeper understanding of the documentation submitted by the authorizer and build context about the authorizer’s processes and practices. The evidence collected during the interview has less impact on the evaluator ratings than documentation. In other words, the evaluation team relies on the documentation provided by the authorizer as the primary evidence to support ratings.

#### **Additional Document Review (Day 4 – PM)**

As noted in the “Document Review” section above, Evaluation Team Members may generate a list of missing documentation for the authorizer to submit during the evaluation. The evaluation team will work together on Day 3 to determine which documents, if any, are needed to fully evaluate the authorizer’s processes and practices and present the list to the authorizer during the Document Debrief. Authorizers shall have up to 90-minutes immediately following the conclusion of the Document Debrief to submit the requested additional documentation to the Evaluation Lead. The Evaluation Team will utilize the afternoon of Day 4 to independently update any sub-standard and standard scores, as needed, and bring any changes to the Consensus Meeting on Day 5.

#### **Consensus Meeting (Day 5 – AM)**

The Evaluation Team will join a virtual meeting via WebEx to achieve rating consensus and evidence consensus for all evaluation sub-standards and standards. The meeting will be scheduled by the Evaluation Lead and run for 3.5 hours. Evaluators should be prepared to discuss their evaluation ratings and comments during the meeting while the Evaluation Lead begins to build the consensus rubric. The meeting

will conclude with the Evaluation Team in agreement for each sub-standard's rating and evaluative comments. This is the final step for Evaluation Team Members.

As stated in the Code of Ethics, all evaluation scores shall be confidential until State Board approval. Evaluators are required to maintain confidentiality of the evaluation reports and outcomes until the final reports are publicly released following Board approval at the first quarterly or special called meeting following the embargoed release of the evaluation reports to the authorizer in January.

### **Quality Editor Review (Day 5 – AM)**

The purpose of this meeting is for the Evaluation Team Lead to present ratings and evidence to the Quality Editor and receive normed feedback to incorporate into the final report. The Evaluation Lead schedules and facilitates the 90-minute virtual meeting. Prior to the meeting, the Evaluation Lead will send a current draft of the evaluation report to the Quality Editor for review and will share his/her screen during the call.

During the meeting, the Evaluation Lead presents every standard rating and its evidence in order. The Quality Editor listens to the presentation and asks clarifying questions when the evidence base for a rating is not apparent or the ratings are inconsistent with other evaluations. The Quality Editor will rely on the Evaluator Additional Guidance as a reference while each standard is presented.

### **Report Writing and Quality Editing (Days 6-9)**

The Evaluation Lead will complete the first draft of the evaluation report by noon on Day 6 and will work with the Quality Editor to review, edit, and finalize the draft evaluation report by noon on Day 9. The table below includes a proposed schedule for writing and quality editing. The Evaluation Lead should confirm this schedule with the Quality Editor and adjust, as needed.

Upon completion of the quality editing process, each evaluation report, at a minimum, shall be reviewed internally by the State Board's general counsel and executive director. The current draft shall be sent to these internal leadership team members by 5:00pm on Day 9. Copy editing should be done by another member of the staff once signed off by the general counsel and executive director. The Evaluation Lead shall schedule report debrief meetings with the internal State Board team to discuss feedback and finalize the draft report.

#### **Proposed Schedule for Evaluation Report Draft Review:**

Day 6 by Noon	Evaluation Lead sends first draft of evaluation report to Quality Editor
Day 7 by 5:00pm	Quality Editor sends first round of revisions to Evaluation Lead
Day 8 by Noon	Evaluation Lead updates draft based on feedback and sends report back to Quality Editor for final review, as needed
Day 9 by Noon	Quality Editor sends final draft of evaluation report to Evaluation Lead
Day 9 by 5:00pm	Evaluation Lead sends final draft of evaluation report to executive director and general counsel for review

### **Preliminary Report Out (Day 10 – AM)**

The preliminary report out call provides the authorizer with a summary of the team's ratings ahead of finalizing the overall report. This call is held in the morning of Day 10 for up to 45 minutes with the



Evaluation Lead and authorizer, which should include the authorizing staff lead, director of schools, and board chair. The Evaluation Lead will schedule and facilitate the call.

The Evaluation Lead should maintain a warm, professional tone throughout the report-out and may wish to begin by thanking the authorizer for their collaboration, openness, and/or hospitality during the process. The Evaluation Lead should provide a concise evidence-based summary of each rating and identify 2-3 key pieces of evidence that supports each rating. It is important to prepare the summary and key evidence prior to the call, especially for findings that may be difficult for the authorizer to hear and/or accept. The call should also allow time for the authorizer to ask questions to clarify evidence and to provide feedback on the overall process. See “Preliminary Report Out Script” in the Appendix of this guide.

## Writing Tips

This section outlines the process for writing evaluative comments and completing the final version of the rubric. See [Evaluator Additional Guidance](#) for further information on scoring.

### Writing Evaluative Comments

- Every applicable sub-standard needs an evaluative comment.
- All evaluative comments should:
  - Identify (in general terms) the applicable documentation used to determine the rating for a sub-standard.
  - Clearly note how the evidence aligns to the criteria of the given rating level.
  - Include enough detail for authorizers and the public to grasp the reasons for the ratings.
- If no appropriate documents were submitted, the evaluative comment should make this clear.
- Evaluative comments must not include evidence or details inconsistent with the metrics in the rubric.
- Avoid using file names. Instead use the common name of the document, such as contract, application, renewal application, termination policy, etc.
- For documents submitted as evidence of a randomly selected school, use the letter assigned to the school as an identifier. For example, “The charter agreement for selected school A includes the signatures for the governing body and authorizer.”
- Always check evaluative comments against the rubric language to ensure they are appropriately aligned and address all components (often found through identification of verbs) within the sub-standard.

### Sample Sentence Frames

- The practice of \_\_\_ is articulated in [document name].
- According to [document name], the authorizer does/does not ...
- The [document name] does/does not include...
- The authorizer’s documentation does not demonstrate/include that...
- While the \_\_\_ shows \_\_\_, the authorizer’s documentation does not demonstrate/include...

### Recommended Verbs

Documents, articulates, demonstrates, records, makes evident

## Style Guidance

- Font: Calibri, 11 point
- School Year References: 20XX-XX school year (i.e., 2019-20 school year)
- Fiscal Year References: FYXX (i.e., FY21)
- Decimals: Always include a zero in front of every decimal (i.e., 0.3%)
- Enumeration: Spell out 0-9 and include the number in parentheses (i.e., The meeting happened within five (5) business days of the notice.) and use numerals for 10 and higher. If a number starts a sentence, spell it out.
- Do not use or insert page numbers.
- Do not use italics or quotation marks to identify documentation.
- When an acronym appears the first time, spell it out and list acronym in parenthesis. Example: English Learners (EL).
- When referring to a specific governance board, use capital B (Board); when referring to board work or the governance in general terms, use lower case b (board).
- Use Oxford commas (serial commas).
- Use present tense in the evaluative comments. Past tense should only be used when referring to something the authorizer or school leader interview said during the evaluation. Example: Site visit reports show...
- Refer to the authorizer by name or as “authorizer”.
- When referring to the authorizer as a group, use “they”. When referring to the authorizer in a singular sense, use “it.”

## Scenario-Based Examples

- When the evidence fully meets the criteria of the rubric:
  - “The authorizer guide includes descriptions for the authorizer’s three staff positions; the guide details responsibilities for each position.”
- When the quality of a document does not fully meet the criteria:
  - “While PowerPoint slides from a school training session include descriptions of staff responsibilities for every phase of the authorizer’s oversight plan, the training session is for a school that is not in the authorizer’s portfolio and, therefore, does not apply to the evaluation.”
- When narrative content refers to a practice or expectation that is not reflected in documentation:
  - “While the narrative states that the authorizer conducts two site visits to every school per year, the authorizer’s documentation does not include reports or other evidence to corroborate the narrative.”
- When the authorizer says a practice or expectation occurs in the Document Debrief, but it is not reflected in documentation:
  - “During the document debrief, the authorizer stated that they conduct two site visits to every school, every year; however, documentation does not corroborate this practice.”

## Exemplar Evaluative Comments

### Insufficient Documentation

Rubric Criterion: “The authorizer submitted at least one (1) documented policy and process for its oversight and evaluation system, but there is no evidence that this information was shared with the authorizer’s Tennessee’s Authorizer Evaluations – Evaluator Guide 2023

schools.”

**Exemplar Evaluative Comment**

“While the site visit tool indicates that limited areas of academics and operations are reviewed on site at least one (1) time, documentation does not demonstrate a system of oversight. Additionally, the authorizer stated in the documentation debrief that it communicates daily with the school and tries to complete formal evaluations monthly; however, their documentation does not reflect this.”

**Alignment with Rubric Metrics**

Rubric Criterion: “All reviewed contracts include targets that compare the school’s student performance to the State, schools serving similar populations or schools in the same geographic area.”

**Exemplar Evaluative Comment**

“Each of the three (3) contracts contain specific targets for attendance, performance on State assessments, and graduation rates. The contract template also requires each school to define an additional site-specific academic measure in the “Other Goals” section of the performance framework.”

## Appendix A: School Leader Interview Script

### Welcome

- Thank you for joining us today. We appreciate having time with you to discuss your authorizer's processes and practices.
- My name is [LEAD]. I am the [ROLE] for the State Board of Education and am serving as the lead for this evaluation. I am joined by the other two members of our evaluation team, [NAMES and ROLES].
- Please take a moment to identify your name, title, and school's name in the chat section. We will be saving the chat text and taking notes for our records. (For small groups, invite leaders to come off mute to introduce themselves)

### Ground Rules

- This interview is scheduled for one hour, though it is possible that we won't need the full time allotted.
- The purpose of holding this school leader interview is to collect evidence of your authorizer's processes and practices in relation to the evaluation standards. While we know that your authorizer also serves as your LEA, we ask that your responses today focus on the authorizing responsibilities including office staffing, budgeting and use of collected authorizer fee funds, application review, the charter agreement, oversight and monitoring, intervention, annual evaluation on your authorizer's performance framework, site visits, amendments, renewal, revocation, and board decisions.
- We would also like to clarify the term "authorizer". Though you likely have the most interaction with the authorizing staff, the term "authorizer" refers to the staff, leadership, and decision-makers and we ask that you consider all three groups when responding to questions.
- We have engaged in the review of the documents your authorizer uploaded as part of the evaluation and have evaluated them against the standards identified by the State Board's Quality Authorizing Standards. This time aims to help us better understand your authorizer's processes and expectations.
- Should the evaluation team choose to reference any of the comments made during this interview, the comments will not be attributed to a particular person or school.
- Our evaluation team looks at two (2) sources of evidence: documents submitted by the authorizer and interviews with school leaders and the authorizer to develop professional findings about the quality of your authorizer's expectations and practices.
- It is very important to know that the evidence collected during this interview has less impact on the evaluator ratings than documentation. In other words, we rely on the documentation your authorizer uploaded as the primary evidence to support ratings. What you share with us during this interview helps us to understand the documentation and potentially note any discrepancies with what the team found during their document review.
- We will discuss the prepared questions that were sent to you previously and may ask additional follow up questions, as needed. For each question, I'll leave it open for you all to answer as you'd like. Feel free to also make use of the chat feature to add on or share additional information.
- Any questions before we begin?

## Interview Questions

1. Is your authorizer's staffing model organized to provide support and oversight to your school? How/how not?
2. Who do you contact with questions about authorizing?
3. From your perspective, does your authorizer's staff have opportunities to provide input with leaders and decision-makers?
4. Is your authorizer's staff, leadership, and decision-makers able to avoid conflicts of interest when it comes to their portfolio of charter schools? How do you know?
5. Is your authorizer transparent about their authorizing budget and use of collected authorizer fee funds? How/how not?
6. Does your authorizer communicate effectively? How/how not? Describe the content.
7. Describe your authorizer's charter school application process.
8. Thinking back to the execution of your charter agreement, did your authorizer meet with you to discuss the terms of the agreement or provide an opportunity for your review prior to execution? Please describe any details about this engagement.
9. Does your authorizer hold you accountable to the terms of your charter agreement? How/how not?
10. Does your authorizer refrain from directing or participating in educational decisions or choices that do not conflict with their LEA responsibilities?
11. Does your authorizer oversee and monitor your school? In what ways?
12. Does your authorizer implement a streamlined annual reporting/compliance monitoring system?
13. [If not answered previously] Does your authorizer provide technical guidance? For example, a document regarding compliance changes in charter school law, a training session on utilizing a new LEA reporting tool, access to recorded how-to videos on compliance topics, guidance provided through ongoing communication such as a newsletter, or support with SPED/EL implementation.
14. Does your authorizer conduct site visits? How often and for what purpose?
15. How does your authorizer evaluate your school(s)?
16. Does your authorizer communicate with you regarding meeting or failing to meet performance expectations or compliance requirements? How/how not?
17. Describe your authorizer's intervention process.
  - For those who have experienced intervention, what did your authorizer require versus allow your discretion?
18. Does your authorizer solicit feedback from you? Describe the context.
19. Describe your authorizer's charter amendment process.
20. Does your authorizer conduct interim reviews during the 5<sup>th</sup> year of the charter term?
21. Describe your authorizer's renewal process.
  - For those who have gone through renewal, did your authorizer provide you with a cumulative report and prospect for renewal? When?
22. How does your authorizer make renewal decisions?

## Closing/Next Steps

- That is all the questions we have for you today. Thank you for taking the time to meet with us and providing your thoughts.

- We will finalize our ratings and evaluative comments over the next week and the State Board will vote on the final evaluation scores at their first quarterly board meeting on [DATE]. Once approved, the evaluation reports will be posted on the State Board's website.
- Thank you again for joining us this morning. We appreciate your time.

## Appendix B: Document Debrief Script

### OPENING (10 Minutes)

#### Welcome

- Thank you for joining us today, we appreciate having time with you to discuss documentation of your authorizing processes and practices.
- My name is [LEAD] and I am the lead for your evaluation. Rounding out the rest of your evaluation team is [TEAM MEMBER NAMES]. We'll introduce ourselves fully in a moment.

#### Ground Rules

- This document debrief will last one hour.
- The purpose for holding this documentation debrief is to give your organization an opportunity to contextualize your documentation and role as an authorizer.
- It is very important to know that the document debrief has less impact on the evaluator ratings than the documentation itself. In other words, we rely on the documentation you uploaded as the primary evidence to support ratings.
- We have engaged in the review of the documents you uploaded as part of your evaluation and have evaluated them against the standards identified by the State Board's Quality Authorizing Standards. This time aims to help us understand your processes and expectations and to understand the documents you have uploaded.
- We will use the first 10 minutes of this meeting and the last 5 minutes for an opening and closing and will leave time for our team to ask questions. The remainder of the scheduled time is yours. You have up to 30 minutes to present. We will hold our questions for after your presentation.
- For any selected standard, you may only discuss the evidence (documentation) you have uploaded. No new documentation will be considered unless requested. We will provide you with a list of any requested documentation at the end of this meeting.

#### Introductions

- Our team will start with introductions, then we would like to learn your names and your titles.
- I am [LEAD NAME and ROLE]. (Team Members and Authorizing Team introduce themselves)
- You may use the next 30 minutes to discuss your authorizing context, practices, and processes. A quick note, we are taking notes for our own records. Any questions before we begin?

### AUTHORIZER'S PRESENTATION (30 Minutes)

- You have the next 30 minutes to present. You may begin.

### EVALUATION TEAM QUESTIONS & DOCUMENT REQUEST (15 Minutes)

- I'll now open it up to our Evaluation Team to ask any questions that they may have.
- [Allow time for questions with 2 minutes reserved for additional documentation requests, if needed]
- As we wrap up our questions, I am also sharing a list of requested additional documents. This list includes any documents that were missing from your submitted documentation and that we will allow additional time to review. You must submit these documents to me via email by no later than 11:30am Central Time to be considered. If you do not have the requested documentation, please note that in your email. I am sending you this list via email now – feel free to respond by the 11:30am Central Time with your attachments. If you need to create a filesharing link because

the files are too large, please use these 90-minutes create one that you can share. No documentation outside of this list or received after 11:30am Central will be accepted. Any questions about the additional documentation?

**CLOSING (5 Minutes)**

- Thank you for taking the time to meet with us. This ends the time you have been allocated to engage with the Evaluation Team.
- Our next step is to begin to finalize our ratings and evaluative comments and will share the preliminary ratings with your leadership next week. You can expect a draft of your evaluation report by [DATE] for your review.
- The State Board will approve the final evaluation report at their first quarterly board meeting on [DATE]. Once finalized, the final evaluation ratings and reports will be posted to the State Board's website.
- What questions can we answer for you about the remainder of this evaluation process?



## Appendix C: Preliminary Report Out Script

### Welcome

- Before we begin, I want to extend a sincere thank you to you and your team for the time you spent pulling together your documentation, organizing and uploading the files, completing the narrative form, and meeting with us during the document debrief. We know that this is a time intensive process and we truly appreciate all the energy and focused resources you spent on it.
- Our review team consisted of three (3) team members who reviewed your [NUMBER] documents and spent approximately 20 hours each to arrive at these findings.
- The ratings I share with you today are preliminary ratings and will be finalized in the coming weeks. As we work to complete our draft of the evaluation report, it is possible that 1 or 2 scores could shift in the process; however, we felt it was important to share out the preliminary scores with you now so you had a sense of your ratings prior to receiving the draft report in December.
- When we share the draft report with you on [DATE], you will have two (2) weeks to review its content for factual corrections. This review period will only provide you with the opportunity to offer feedback on the evidence stated within the report, not the ratings. From there, we will finalize the report and share it with you prior to the Board meeting on [DATE]. Once the Board approves the ratings, the reports will be made publicly available via our website.
- We will now spend the next 30 minutes walking through each standard’s rating and key pieces of evidence that supports the rating. Please know that these ratings were arrived upon by a thorough review of all the documentation that you submitted as well as clarifications presented in the school leader interview and document debrief. While this is not meant to be a discussion of what the ratings are, I am happy to answer any clarifying questions you may have about the evidence that is cited.
- Any questions before we jump in?

### Preliminary Report Share Out

(Use the sample below to develop notes for each standard rating)

### Closing

- Now that I’ve walked through all the standard ratings, I’ll share the overall rating and score. The overall score is \_\_\_ and that falls into the \_\_\_ score range. You will receive additional information about any follow-up actions in the draft and final reports. Any questions?
- I’d also like to leave space for any feedback you may have for us about this process. We believe in continuous improvement and appreciate your authorizing staff’s engagement in our process since its inception. While this is not the only opportunity to share, I’m happy to take back and feedback you have now about this round of evaluation.
- Thank you again. You can expect to receive a draft of the evaluation report for your review by [DATE] and the report will have much more detail than we discussed today. Please continue to reach out with questions. I appreciate your time.

### Sample Prep Work for Call (complete for each standard)

<b>1a</b>	Planning and Commitment to Excellence	2
<b>1b</b>	Human Resources	0.67
<b>1c</b>	Financial Resources	2.5

## Key Evidence:

1a – This standard is about your team’s planning and commitment to excellence and we focused on your application materials, annual reports, and a variety of in-process documents to arrive at your score. Some of the areas where you were missing documentation was related to developing all members of the authorizing staff and board of education as well as clear policies, processes, and practices that streamline the work.

1b – This standard focuses on human resources and the evidence we used here was the authorizing budget, your resume, and details about your professional development. However, we did not have an organizational chart or authorizer fee report to determine who exactly is considered part of the authorizing team or any evidence of development occurring within the review term. Unfortunately, while you are making great strides here, the review term ran from September 1, 2019 to August 31, 2021 so all of the development you have done since then could not count toward this standard and there was no other evidence beyond the documentation for your development.

1c – This standard evaluates the office’s financial resources and, while we had the authorizing budget, we did not have either of the two (2) authorizer fee reports that are required to review making it difficult to determine if all authorizing responsibilities are fulfilled and how those supporting your charters are funded.